



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

DOWNTOWN APPALACHIA REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

INVESTING IN WEST VIRGINIA'S DOWNTOWNS

West Virginia towns can be prosperous places where people want to work, live, visit, and invest. The Natural Capital Investment Fund and the Brownfields Assistance Center at West Virginia University have teamed up to create the **Downtown Appalachia Redevelopment Initiative** (the "Initiative") because we see tremendous opportunities – and the entrepreneurs, developers and property owners with the creativity, energy, and commitment to capitalize on them. If you are working to transform vacant, decaying, and/or underutilized properties into thriving business centers, mixed-use retail and housing complexes, community facilities, and other cultural assets, we want to hear from you.

LET US HELP YOU

Redevelopment can be challenging. Grand historic buildings often suffer from structural issues. Older apartment buildings may have outdated floor plans and insufficient safety systems. Some sites are plagued with environmental contaminants. The required clean-up, upgrades, and retrofitting can be costly and difficult to finance, due to low appraisals or rents. The planning process can also be difficult and cost-prohibitive.

Our goal is to make certain that the needed resources are available to support the transformation of vacant, rundown, or underperforming properties into community assets. The Initiative seeks to support downtown developers and to make sure they have the financing, skills, and expertise to capitalize on opportunities by (1) offering financing solutions to facilitate redevelopment projects that revitalize West Virginia towns and (2) providing technical assistance to strengthen and advance projects and increase developers' skills and expertise.

TARGETED ASSISTANCE THAT MAKES SENSE FOR YOU AND YOUR PROJECT

Technical assistance services will be tailored to meet the needs of the developer and project and may be provided by the Initiative team; a qualified local, state, federally funded, or non-profit program; and/or a qualified consultant(s). These services will be delivered in several ways:

- One-on-one or group project meetings with a Technical Assistance provider, coach, or consultant
- A Property Redevelopment handbook including templates and a resource guide
- Downtown redevelopment training events
- Sponsorships to attend trainings and conferences that will advance a project
- Grants or loans to reduce the expense of project development activities

Eligible applicants can access technical assistance on a wide variety of topics including:

- Site selection, evaluation, and assessment to meet the intended reuse
- Project development concept planning
- Feasibility analysis, cash flow financial projections, and business planning
- Building condition evaluation and development of architectural specifications
- Environmental assessments and energy efficiency and renewable energy feasibility and planning
- Financing and capital structuring options
- Assistance in identifying necessary components of the project development team
- Market analysis
- Asset and property management

HOW TO APPLY

Step 1 – Tell us about your project: If you are a current or prospective Natural Capital Investment Fund loan client, discuss your project needs and interest in the Initiative with your Loan Officer. Otherwise, contact the Redevelopment Initiative Program Lead Ray Moeller at raymond.moeller@mail.wvu.edu or 304-293-0390. You and an Initiative team member will confirm basic eligibility and explore whether the program may be a good fit for you and your project.

Step 2 – Initial Project Assessment: Meet with the Initiative Program Lead to assess the status and needs of your project to determine the “critical path” for advancing the project and/or developing your skills. Together, you and the Program Lead will determine the optimal course of action and shape a technical assistance request that best meets the needs of your project and the goals of the Initiative.

Step 3 – Submit an application: Once you and the Program Lead have agreed on how best to strengthen and advance your project and build your team’s skills and expertise, it is time to prepare and submit a formal application. The Program Lead will guide and support you through this process.

Step 4 – Application approval and structuring of TA: The Initiative’s Review Committee will consider the application and determine the appropriate level of assistance, based on the availability of funds, the applicant’s need, and the extent to which the request will advance the Initiative’s goals and priorities. Upon approval, the applicant and the Program Lead will work together to identify, vet, and select the TA provider(s). Together, the applicant, Program Lead, and TA provider will detail the scope of work.

ELIGIBILITY AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applicant: The applicant must be an individual, organization, or business that is currently engaged in -- or intends to engage in -- the redevelopment of an eligible project. Individuals and for-profit and nonprofit entities are eligible.

Project: Eligible redevelopment projects must transform a vacant, rundown, and/or underutilized property into a desirable place to live, work, play, or visit. The project as conceived must:

- respect and take advantage of existing structures or property characteristics regarding historic, cultural, and natural significance;
- create a safe, healthy place, designed to optimize the well-being of occupants and the community;
- include energy efficiency, water saving, and energy generating measures to the extent feasible – to further environmental as well as financial stability and sustainability; and
- embrace design, construction, and management practices that preserve and reinforce traditional, dense, mixed-use downtowns.

The development concept must include one or more eligible downtown uses such as commercial office and retail; community facilities such as theaters, schools, and community centers; apartments and condominiums; hotels, inns, and vacation rentals; and light manufacturing and makerspaces.

Downtown location and benefit: The proposed redevelopment efforts must be targeted toward downtown commercial business districts in West Virginia towns that have demonstrated market opportunity and existing community capacity to support such redevelopment.

Positive Image: The applicant must commit to promoting West Virginia’s downtown districts as desirable places to live, work, play, and visit; cultivating a positive image of the region, shared by community members and outsiders alike; and helping to build a welcoming and proud brand for “Downtown Appalachia.”

QUESTIONS? Contact the Program Lead Ray Moeller at raymond.moeller@mail.wvu.edu or 304-293-0390.